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The story is alarming. The reaction even more disturbing.

A USA Today report last week said Transportation Security Administration screeners failed to notice fake bombs 60 percent of the time at O'Hare International Airport. They were even worse at Los Angeles International Airport, failing 75 percent of the time. The newspaper reported the story using classified information.

And the response from the TSA: "We expect failure rates. We don't want (screeners) to get comfortable."

"I don't think we're ever going to get to the point that there's an A+ or perfect score, because if we ever get a perfect score it means the testers aren't pushing hard enough," Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said in published reports Thursday.

In other words: Don't be concerned. It's all under control. That's not very comforting to us. And neither is it comforting to others.

"Frankly, it's beyond comprehension," Mathew Lippman, a security expert and University of Illinois at Chicago criminal justice professor, told Daily Herald staff writer Joseph Ryan. "It is pretty shocking."

"Our safety and economy depend on a safe and efficient O'Hare," U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, a Highland Park Republican, said. He wants a conference called with federal security officials to discuss training.

But TSA said the reports are using old numbers, from 2006, and that, in fact, the numbers are

getting better. But they refused to reveal those percentages. Again, not very comforting. They also said that the numbers are so high because undercover agents are trying to sneak fake bombs past screeners every day at every airport.

But at San Francisco International Airport, private screeners are used, not TSA screeners. They missed the fake bombs 20 percent of the time. While still a high number, the fact they are so much better than the government screeners raises questions, as Kirk did, about the training.

"There are a lot of ways they can get more efficient," said Bill McReynolds, a vice chair of the Air Line Pilots Association's security committee. If that's true, then Kirk's call for a conference to discuss the training of the screeners nationwide is a good one. It certainly can't hurt, given these kinds of figures.

"Flunking a test 70 or 60 percent of the time ... is something that is so scary that the American people should be outraged that six years (after Sept. 11) this is still possible," U.S. House Homeland Security Committee member Rep. Ed Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, told ABC News.

Count us among those who are outraged, both by the test results and the answers we've been given as to why the results are so bad. We deserve to know what's being done and how the TSA will improve security measures.